

Houghton Area Master Plan Citizen's Review Committee July 8, 2003

CRC members attending: Suzanne Bott, Dale Calvert, Sarah Craighead, Sheila Enos, Margaret Fowler, Margie Hildebrand, Sandie Jacobson, John Macko, Lex McGraw, Linda Morales, Suzanne Miles, Peggy Nolty, Tony Novelli, Cathy Rex, Frank Salbego, Thomas Sayler-Brown, Phil Swaim, Michael Tone, Michelle Zimmerman.

CRC members absent: Ken Abrams, Peter Backus, Brent Davis, Mark Frederickson, John Grabo, Carl Maass, Ray Schneider, Roy Schoonover, James/Betty Shinn, Jeff Simms, Frank Wilczek.

Technical Advisory Team members attending: Richard Harper (Tucson Police Department), Frank Sousa (Tucson Stormwater Section), and Mark Crum (Operations).

Opening

Facilitator Freda Johnson opened the meeting at 6:01 p.m. She led a round of introductions, and then reviewed the ground rules. She then asked for comments or corrections to the June meeting summary. One amendment was proposed and accepted, as follows:

**** Amendment:** Page 3, Paragraph 3, amended from "It was expected that this information could be compiled into some kind of vision statement" to read: "It was expected that this information could be compiled into a draft vision statement for CRC review and discussion."

Call to the Audience

A Call to the Audience was added to the agenda at this time. There was a question about why there was no representation from Highland Trails and Mesquite Ranch subdivisions, and if a representative could be placed on the committee. In response it was clarified that letters were sent out in the past to neighborhood associations to solicit participation in the HAMP and the CRC. An issue was raised about City notification to residents about rezonings. Concerns about the extent of notification should be expressed to City Council members through the appropriate ward office.

Presentation by Tony Novelli on video by Mark Lakeman of Portland with City Repair.

CRC member, Tony Novelli works for the Development Center for Appropriate Technology (DCAT), a non-profit organization based in Tucson but with national outreach that is focused on construction and promoting sustainability. DCAT works with building code departments and trade groups to help them understand environmental

sustainability in construction. The Lakeman video excerpt focused on renovations and retrofitting that have been done successfully in Portland.

The video gave an overview of historical influences on planning and development of urban areas. For instance the Northwest Land Ordinance, or National Land Ordinance, has dominated land planning and use for centuries in the U.S. It is a grid pattern of streets and city layout that is logical and convenient in some ways, but has the social effect of having no destination, no gathering place. A village pattern of development is more circular, containing “destinations” at central intersections. These “plazas” create a sense of place, safety for children and people, and interaction among generations. There is a sense of permanence and common ownership. In Italy there is a saying, “Everything happens in the piazza (plaza).”

In its early development the U.S. did not mandate public spaces or squares. This has led to unused common space, a high crime rate, and a mentality about land as a commodity. The City Repair Project in Portland has been to plan growth to include multiple use and common space, and to renovate the inner city to reflect the same results.

Following the presentation, Tony invited questions and comments as noted below.

- Frank Salbego commented that at the beginning he didn't understand the importance or purpose of presenting the historical background, but now he understand the concepts better.
- A CRC member expressed concern about how to make these concepts happen in reality. It takes population density to allow for local shops and mass transportation to be successful, yet developers complain that the market wants low density with half acre lots. Tony replied with an example of a situation in a community where there was some controversy about whether a neighborhood could paint an intersection in order to calm traffic. After permission was given and it was done, people could then see and directly experience how an environmental change can create safety, a sense of place and neighborhood pride. People find it hard to imagine something they've never seen or known, they need to be shown.
- Mike Tone said that he still wants his front and back yard, his garage, and that he doesn't like 3 or 5 story buildings. Tony agreed that this is a common preference, and that we need to give people a variety of options to choose from. Currently they only have single-family detached homes, or apartments, to choose from. There is also the challenge of balancing walkable communities with parking needs for residential and business needs.
- Rich Harper noted that “Safe by design” is very important in reducing crime. The police department can suggest some basic safety measures which can be built into a development from the beginning.
- Civano has tried some new things – low walls, rear garages, public space in front.
- An observer commented that Mesquite Ranch has successfully incorporated many measures to encourage neighborhood interaction. These should be taken note of and promoted.

- Cathy Rex said that the “grid” effect can have some benefits. An example is the Campbell and Grant area. The neighborhoods are active and people walk a lot and use common space. Tony agreed that that area has lots of “destinations” – small shops, restaurants, parks and schools, which encourage common use.

Presentation by Suzanne Bott of the Sonoran Institute focused on, “What makes places special.”

Suzanne, a CRC member, reported that the Sonoran Institute is a nonprofit organization working to improve the quality of the built and natural environment of Pima County. Their guiding principles are: Build on local policies; Learn from other communities; Recognize local capabilities; Encourage partnerships; Promote incentives, such as density bonuses and prompt review of proposals; and Support sustainability

They have published a book “Building from the Best of Tucson”, which profiles some local developments or projects that exemplify positive community-building qualities. Copies of the book were made available to the CRC. The book focused on several qualities that are considered “best”: Growth Management, Master Planning, Civic Communities, or New Urbanism, Green Building; Creative Infill; Regional Architecture and Design

Suzanne’s presentation illustrated the need to balance land use and think long term, as much as 50 years into the future. Communities designed to promote civic involvement encourage walking and will decrease the epidemic of obesity in America. Green building refers to constructions measures that are practical and efficient, as well as healthier for people. Simple techniques like higher insulation and use of plantings can have a large effect.

The Sonoran Institute is assisting with new projects in Tucson such as the Community Design Academy, which will provide a course of study for planners and developers. They are promoting a network among professionals and helping to streamline the development process.

Comments

- John Macko asked about the cause of the split between city and the county and he asked why there no representation on this CRC. Phil Swaim replied that he is on the Southeast Planning and Coordinating Committee, which works with all jurisdictions and holds informal planning workshops. Staff said that the HAMP’S Technical Advisory Team has County representation. Phil observed that the City of Tucson is more proactive with design issues than the County.
- An observer had heard about this CRC meeting through word of mouth, and didn’t know if there was publicity about it. The observer wanted to know where to voice concerns, and that communication is a problem.

- An observer asked about the plans for this group. Michael Wyneken responded with an overview; i.e., to create development plans for 7700 acres of state land, mostly east of Houghton Road.
- An observer had heard that in 2006 Houghton road was to be widened. The response was that this is in the City of Tucson General Plan, and there are plans to do this over time, in steps, however, there is no money budgeted for this. Actual implementation will depend on funding. Phil also responded that ADOT is in charge of the Houghton Corridor Project, and in October they will present five alternative options at public meetings.
- An observer wondered if the planned density is known yet. The response was that an average of 4-6 residences per acre was the tentative plan. Michael reminded the group that the staff does not yet have all the information about land forms, drainage, etc. that are needed in order to make this determination.
- There was a question from a CRC member that although everyone is getting educated there is a lot of repetition. She asked what happens next. Michael reviewed the Project Plan that was handed out in May, which divides the project into phases.
- Some kind of sound amplification is needed to allow everyone to hear.
- A CRC member asked that Houghton be correctly pronounced: "hoe-ton".
- A CRC member requested that the survey results from the SE Corridor Committee be presented at a future meeting.
- A CRC member advocated for Mesquite Ranch representation on the CRC.
- Margie Hildebrand asked about more information about plans presented to the State by private developers. Response was made that this occurred in 1998-99 and the developer presentation because the basis for the State plan except for open space which was reduced. It was said that there is more revenue to the State if all land is developable.
- Frank Salbego said that there is a need to get tough on people who have been absent for more than a certain number of meetings. There was a request to add to our Ground Rules a requirement that anyone missing three meetings be dropped from the CRC. On a show of hands, about half the members of the CRC agreed. However, the group was reminded that there have been problems with changing locations and communication, possibly contributing to members' absences. Michael agreed to talk with the City Manager about this request and the possibility of adding new members from nearby subdivision such as Mesquite Ranch.
- Sarah Craighead announced that on July 23 Saguaro National Park will host an Open House to discuss its General Management Plan, at PCC East from 3 to 8 PM. This Plan will deal with the growth that is anticipated in this area in the near future, and how it will affect the park.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m. The next meeting will be on August 12 in this location.